

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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TAGS: ECIN, EGEN, XY, LI

SUBJECT: SUMMER INTERN PROJECT --STUDY OF ECOWAS

REF: STATE 134253

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1. REGARDING PARA 2 OF REFTTEL, QUESTIONS AND RESERVATIONS
OVER GOALS AND ODDS FOR SURVIVAL OF ECOWAS HAVE BEEN RAISED
BY MEDIA, DEPARTMENT, VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL FORA, SCHOLARS, ETC.

2. MAJOR QUESTIONS HAVE INVOLVED BASIC ISSUES--

A. TO WHAT DEGREE WILL CONFLICTING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES TOWARD DEVELOPMENT DETER PROGRESS TOWARD ECOWAS GOALS?

B. WILL COOPERATION AMONG MEMBER STATES BE UNDERMINED SINCE MOST ECONOMIES BASED PRIMARILY ON EXPORT OF RAW MATERIALS AND ARE THUS COMPETITIVE, NOT COMPLEMENTARY?

C. CAN ESTABLISHED TRADE PATTERNS WHICH ARE NOW DIVERGENT AND OUTWARD ORIENTED ALONG COLONIAL LINES BE ALTERED SUFFICIENTLY TO MEET ECOWAS OBJECTIVES?

D. A BASIC ASSUMPTION WITHIN ECOWAS IS THAT THROUGH AN ENLARGED MARKET NEW OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE CREATED FOR ECONOMIES OF SCALE IN MANUFACTURING. IS THIS A REALISTIC ASSUMPTION GIVEN THE CONSTRAINTS IN MOST STATES OF POORLY DEVELOPED INFRASTRUCTURE AND SCARCITY OF REQUIRED LABOR SKILLS?

E. WILL CLOSED AND PROTECTED COMMON MARKET ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY THAT IS REQUIRED TO SERVE MEMBER STATES OVER LONG TERM?

F. WHERE WILL DEFICIT PRONE, SLOW GROWING STATES COME UP WITH RESERVES TO SUPPORT COMPENSATION FUND WHICH IS TO OFFSET LOSSES OF CUSTOMS REVENUES BY MEMBER STATES?
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G. CAN THE GREAT DIFFERENCES IN ECONOMIC SIZE AND WEALTH OF MEMBER STATES BE ACCOMMODATED?

H. NIGERIA IS CARRYING BURDEN OF ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF OPERATING BUDGET OF ECOWAS. WILL POOR COUNTRIES REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THERE WILL BE EVENTUAL BENEFITS (WITHOUT TRADE-OFF OF ECONOMIC DOMINATION BY NIGERIA), AND WILL RICHER COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO FOOT THE BILL OF ECOWAS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE?

I. ASSUMING THE FINANCIAL UNDERWRITING OF ECOWAS IS FORTHCOMING, AND GIVEN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE MEMBER STATES, CAN THE NECESSARY ENERGY AND ATTENTION BE SPARED FROM DOMESTIC PROBLEMS THAT MUST BE DEVOTED TO THIS EXTERNAL EXPERIMENT TO MAKE IT WORK?

J. SOME MEMBER STATES ARE NOT CONTENT WITH THE EXISTING COMPOSITION OF ECOWAS MEMBERSHIP. WILL THERE BE COMPROMISES THAT CREATE FRACTURES IN FOUNDATION OF ECOWAS? WHICH NEW STATES UNDER CONSIDERATION WOULD TEND TO DILUTE STRENGTH, AND WHICH WOULD TEND TO REINFORCE?

K. ASSUMING THE WORST, IF ECOWAS SHOULD DISINTEGRATE, WHAT IMPACT WILL THIS HAVE ON FUTURE POTENTIAL FOR SMALLER ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION OF COUNTRIES WITHIN REGION WHO HAVE RELATIVELY COMPATIBLE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL GOALS AND THE WILL TO COOPERATE?

L. WOULD A LESS AMBITIOUS BEGINNING (SMALLER ECONOMIC REGION) WITH OPPORTUNITY FOR GRADUAL EXPANSION WITH EXPERIENCE CONTRIBUTE BEST TO WEST AFRICA'S INTERESTS AND SERVE AS A LABORATORY TO DEVELOP INSTITUTIONS ABLE TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTEMPTS AT ECONOMIC COOPERATION?

3. IN FURTHER REFERENCE TO PART 2, BEFORE SPECULATING ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FUTURE RELATIONSHIP OF USG TO ECOWAS, SOME RESPONSES ARE NEEDED TO PRECEDING QUESTIONS. USG ROLE IN ECOWAS MAY IN LARGE PART BE DETERMINED BY WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, WE ARE ASKED TO ASSUME. ARMED WITH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF POSSIBLE DIRECTION OF ECOWAS DEVELOPMENT, USG CAN DEVELOP POSITION AND BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO REQUESTS OR MAKE OFFERS/SUGGESTIONS ON OWN INITIATIVE.

4. ASSUMING THAT ECOWAS IS SURVIVING IN RECOGNIZABLE FORM 10 YEARS HENCE, TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTING FREE TRADE AREA (10 YEARS) AND CUSTOMS UNION AND COMMON EXTERNAL TARIFF (15 YEARS) PROBABLY TOO AMBITIOUS. QUESTION ARISES WHETHER TIMETABLE ESTABLISHED AS INFLEXIBLE DEADLINE, OR AS PSYCHOLOGICAL PROD, I.E., NEAR ENOUGH TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY TOWARD GOALS, BUT NOT SO REMOTE THAT DATES CAN BE IGNORED FOR TIME BEING. SUCH FLEXIBILITY WILL BE IMPORTANT TO SUCCESS OF ECOWAS. AND IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO HAVE STRONG LEADERSHIP THAT FOCUSES ON SUCCESSES, HOWEVER SMALL, IN ORDER TO BEAR UP UNDER OVERWHELMING PROBLEMS THAT ORGANIZATION MUST FACE.

5. IF AN ORGANIZATION WITH MEMBERSHIP AS DIVERGENT AS THAT OF ECOWAS IS TO SURVIVE, IT MUST BELIEVE IN AND COME TO KNOW VALUE OF COOPERATION. COOPERATION IMPLIES COMPROMISE AND THUS CAN BE AN ENGINE OF MODERATION AMONG MORE RADICAL STATES. A MAJOR TEST OF ECOWAS'S VIABILITY WILL BE DISPOSITION OF STATES TOWARD COMPROMISE. FROM STANDPOINT OF GENERAL U.S. INTERESTS, THIS SHOULD HAVE POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH ECOWAS STATES.

6. PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAS REFERRED TO ECOWAS AS AN "ACT OF FAITH." THAT'S FINE FOR A BEGINNING, BUT COMMUNITY WILL FACE SOME HELLISH TESTS IF IT IS TO PROGRESS.
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7. GOOD LUCK TO SUMMER INTERN. WOULD APPRECIATE COPY OF STUDY
AND CONCLUSIONS WHEN PROJECT IS COMPLETED.

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